

WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

- 5 1. A method of providing a value bearing indicium to an end-user via a computer network, the method comprising the steps of:
- receiving validation information from an end-user's machine via the computer network;
- 10 generating value bearing indicium data using the validation information;
- storing the value bearing indicium data in a validation information database;
- transmitting the value bearing indicium data to the end-user's machine via the computer network;
- 15 receiving the value bearing indicium data from a scanning machine via the computer network;
- determining a validity status for the value bearing indicium data using the validation information database;
- 20 and
- transmitting the validity status to the scanning machine.
2. The method of claim 1, further comprising the steps of:
- 25 receiving a value bearing indicium data request from the end-user's machine via the computer network;
- generating the validation information from the value bearing indicium data request; and
- transmitting the validation information to the end-user's machine via the computer network.
- 30 3. The method of claim 2, further comprising the step of transmitting the validity status to a value bearing indicium distributor.

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- 5 4. The method of claim 1, wherein the validity status of the value bearing indicium data is determined to be invalid if the value bearing indicium data is not found in the validation information database.
- 10 5. The method of claim 1, wherein the validity status of the value bearing indicium data is determined to be redeemed if the value bearing indicium data is found in the validation information database and the value bearing indicium data has been previously redeemed.
- 15 6. The method of claim 1 wherein the value bearing indicium data is a ticket.
- 20 7. The method of claim 1 wherein the value bearing indicium data is postage for a mail piece.
- 25 8. The method of claim 1 wherein the value bearing indicium data is currency.
- 30 9. The method of claim 1 wherein the value bearing indicium data is a voucher.
10. The method of claim 1 wherein the value bearing indicium data is a coupon.
- 35 11. The method of claim 1 wherein the value bearing indicium data is a traveler's check.

12. The method of claim 1, wherein the step of generating value bearing indicium data using the validation information includes the steps of:

generating a message digest by hashing a first subset of the validation information;

generating a digital signature from the message digest; and

generating a bar code from a second subset of the validation information.

13. A method of providing a ticket to an end-user via a computer network, the method comprising the steps of:

providing a ticket server, the ticket server operably coupled to a validation information database;

providing a distributor server;

receiving a ticket request from an end-user's machine by the distributor server via the computer network;

generating validation information from the ticket request by the distributor server;

transmitting the validation information to the end-user's machine by the distributor server via the computer network;

receiving by the ticket server the validation information from the end-user's machine via the computer network;

generating by the ticket server a ticket using the validation information;

storing the ticket in the validation information database;

transmitting the ticket to the end-user's machine by the ticket server via the computer network;

receiving the ticket from a scanning machine by the ticket server via the computer network;

determining a validity status for the ticket by the ticket server using the validation information database;

5 transmitting the validity status to the scanning machine by the ticket server via the computer network; and

transmitting the validity status to the distributor server by the ticket server via the computer network.

10 14. The method of claim 13, wherein the validity status of the value bearing indicium data is determined to be invalid if the indicium is not found in the validation information database.

15 15. The method of claim 13, wherein the validity status of the value bearing indicium data is determined to be redeemed if the value bearing indicium data is found in the validation information database and the value bearing indicium data has been previously redeemed.

20 16. The method of claim 13, the step of generating a ticket using the validation information including the steps of:

generating a message digest by hashing a first subset of the validation information;

25 generating a digital signature from the message digest;

generating a bar code from a second subset of the validation information; and

30 transmitting via the computer network the digital signature and the bar code to the end-user's machine to be printed as a ticket.

35 17. The method of claim 16, wherein the message digest is generated using a secure hash algorithm.

18. The method of claim 17, wherein the digital signature is generated using a digital signature algorithm.

5 19. A data processing system adapted to process a value bearing indicium via a computer network, the data processing system comprising:

an end-user's machine;

10 a scanning machine; and

an indicium server including:

a processor; and

a memory operably coupled to the processor and having indicium server program instructions stored therein, the processor being operable to execute the indicium server program instructions, the indicium server program instructions including:

receiving validation information from the end-user's machine via the computer network;

20 generating value bearing indicium data using the validation information;

storing the value bearing indicium data in a validation information database;

transmitting the value bearing indicium data to the end-user's machine via the computer network;

receiving the value bearing indicium data from the scanning machine via the computer network;

30 determining a validity status for the value bearing indicium data using the validation information database; and

transmitting the validity status to the scanning machine.

5 20. The data processing system of claim 19, wherein the validity status of the value bearing indicium data is determined to be invalid if the value bearing indicium data is not found in the validation information database.

10 21. The data processing system of claim 19, wherein the validity status of the value bearing indicium data is determined to be redeemed if the value bearing indicium data is found in the validation information database and the value bearing indicium data has been previously redeemed.

15 22. The data processing system of claim 19 further comprising a distributor server, the distributor server including:

a processor; and

20 a memory operably coupled to the processor and having program instructions stored therein, the processor being operable to execute the program instructions, the program instructions including:

25 receiving a value bearing indicium data request from the end-user's machine via the computer network; generating the validation information from the value bearing indicium data request; and

transmitting the validation information to the end-user's machine via the computer network.

30 23. The data processing system of claim 22, the indicium server program instructions further including transmitting the validity status to the distributor server.

35 24. The data processing system of claim 19 wherein the value bearing indicium data is a ticket.

25. The data processing system of claim 19 wherein the value bearing indicium data is postage for a mail piece.

26. The data processing system of claim 19 wherein the value bearing indicium data is currency.

27. The data processing system of claim 19 wherein the value bearing indicium data is a voucher.

28. The data processing system of claim 19 wherein the value bearing indicium data is a coupon.

29. The data processing system of claim 19 wherein the value bearing indicium data is a traveler's check.

30. The data processing system of claim 19, wherein the program instructions for generating value bearing indicium data using the validation information include:

generating a message digest by hashing a first subset of the validation information;

generating a digital signature from the message digest;

generating a bar code from a second subset of the validation information; and

transmitting via the computer network the digital signature and the bar code to the end-user's machine to be printed as a value bearing indicium.

31. The data processing system of claim 30, wherein the message digest is generated using a secure hash algorithm.

32. The data processing system of claim 31, wherein the digital signature is generated using a digital signature algorithm.

5 33. A data processing system adapted to provide a ticket to an end-user via a computer network, the data processing system comprising:

an end-user's machine;  
a scanning machine;  
a distributor server including:

10 a processor; and

a memory operably coupled to the processor and having program instructions stored therein, the processor being operable to execute the program instructions, the program instructions including:

15 receiving a ticket request from the end-user's machine via the computer network;

generating validation information from the ticket request; and

20 transmitting the validation information to the end-user's machine via the computer network;

a ticket server operably coupled to a validation information database, the ticket server including:

a processor; and

25 a memory operably coupled to the processor and having program instructions stored therein, the processor being operable to execute the program instructions, the program instructions including:

receiving the validation information from the end-user's machine via the computer network;

30 generating ticket data using the validation information;

storing the ticket data in the validation information database;

35 transmitting the ticket data to the end-user's machine via the computer network;



receiving the ticket data from the scanning machine via the computer network;

determining a validity status for the ticket data using the validation information database; and

transmitting the validity status to the scanning machine.

34. The data processing system of claim 33, wherein the validity status of the ticket data is determined to be invalid if the ticket data is not found in the validation information database.

35. The data processing system of claim 33, wherein the validity status of the ticket data is determined to be redeemed if the ticket data is found in the validation information database and the ticket data has been previously redeemed.

36. The data processing system of claim 33, wherein the program instructions for generating the ticket data using the validation information include:

generating a message digest by hashing a first subset of the validation information;

generating a digital signature from the message digest;

generating a bar code from a second subset of the validation information; and

transmitting via the computer network the digital signature and the bar code to the end-user's machine to be printed as a ticket.

37. The data processing system of claim 36, wherein the message  
digest is generated using a secure hash algorithm.

38. The data processing system of claim 37, wherein the digital  
signature is generated using a digital signature algorithm.

39. A computer-readable storage medium embodying computer  
program instructions for execution by a computer, the  
computer program instructions adapting a computer to  
provide value bearing indicium data to a end-user via a  
computer network, the computer program instructions  
comprising:

receiving validation information from an end-user's  
machine via the computer network;

generating value bearing indicium data using the  
validation information;

storing the value bearing indicium data in a  
validation information database;

transmitting the value bearing indicium data to the  
end-user's machine via the computer network;

receiving the value bearing indicium data from a  
scanning machine via the computer network;

determining a validity status for the value bearing  
indiciu data using the validation information database;  
and

transmitting the validity status to the scanning  
machine.

40. The computer-readable storage medium of claim 39, wherein  
the validity status of the value bearing indicium data is  
determined to be invalid if the value bearing indicium data  
is not found in the validation information database.

5 41. The computer-readable storage medium of claim 39, wherein the validity status of the value bearing indicium data is determined to be redeemed if the value bearing indicium data is found in the validation information database and the value bearing indicium data has been previously redeemed.

10 42. The computer-readable storage medium of claim 39, the program instructions further including:

receiving a value bearing indicium data request from the end-user's machine via the computer network;

15 generating the validation information from the value bearing indicium data request; and

transmitting the validation information to the end-user's machine via the computer network.

20 43. A method of providing a value bearing indicium to an end-user via a computer network, the method comprising the steps of:

receiving a set of relevant information from an end-user's machine via the computer network;

25 verifying authenticity of the end-user responsive to the relevant information;

generating a message digest by hashing a first subset of the relevant information;

generating a digital signature from the message digest;

30 generating a 2-D bar code from a second subset of the relevant information;

transmitting via the computer network the digital signature and the 2-D bar code to the end-user's machine; and

printing the digital signature and the 2-D bar code  
next to each other as a value bearing indicium.

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44. The method of Claim 43, wherein the message digest is  
generated using a secure hash algorithm.

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45. The method of Claim 44, wherein the digital signature is  
generated using a digital signature algorithm.

46. The method of Claim 43, wherein the first subset of  
relevant information and the second subset of relevant  
information are the same.

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